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*Mercenary Principles destructive of
National Security:*

A
S E R M O N

PREACHED AT

Ware and Thundridge in Hertfordshire,

ON FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1758;

Being the Day appointed for a General Fast.

By HENRY BRYANT, A.M.

*Malo alteri, quàm nostræ ominari; neque tantum de nostra,
sed de omni Republica disputo.*

CIC. de Off. II. 21.

L O N D O N,

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M D C C L V I I I.

Ministry of
National Security

SECRET

THE ATTACHED AT

Notes and Photographs in Her Majesty's



DR HENRY PRYANT, M.A.

C/O. 60. H. 21.

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JOSHUA vii. 8.

*O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth
their Backs before their Enemies?*

WHEN God called *Joshua* to succeed *Moses* in that great and important Charge of conducting the Armies of *Israel* to the Possession of the promised Land, he expressly told him, that he would not only secure a general Success to his Arms, but that no Man should be able to stand before him all the Days of his Life; that he would be with him as he had been with *Moses*, and never fail him, nor forsake him. And the better to confirm his divine Commission, as well as to secure the People in their future Subjection, who were very apt to complain both against the Persons and Conduct of their Leaders, God was also pleased to display before them a very signal and extraordinary Instance of the superior Greatness of his own Power, viz. by causing the Waters of the River *Jordan* to be divided and gathered together upon an Heap, till all the Children of *Israel* were clean passed over it.

Jos. i. 5.

Jos. vii. 16.

By such amazing Signs and Wonders as these, God had all along endeavoured to support the Hopes of a desponding and almost broken-hearted People, whose Spirits had been nearly exhausted by a long Series of Hardships undergone in their slavish Subjection to one of the most barbarous and insulting Tyrants, and also by a wearisome and toilsome March through a thirsty and barren Wilderiness.

God was pleased to separate this People from the heathen World, in order to uphold and propagate his true Religion, and which had been nearly lost by their Communion with the idolatrous Nations: But for this End it was necessary to put them under new Laws and a new Covenant, and to confirm and establish both by some extraordinary Instances of a superior Power; because the very Act of making them a chosen and peculiar People seemed but a partial one; such, at least, as they had no great Reason to expect; since, as their Leaders were pleased to observe to them, they could not plead their own Righteousness, for they were a stiff-necked People; nor yet their Number, for they were the fewest of all People. What Assurance then could they have for the Accomplishment of those Promises, which, in the Name of the God of *Israel*, their Leaders had made to them? Why, certainly, no better than this, *viz.* the extraordinary Instances of divine Power exerted in a visible Manner to confirm their Authority.

But

But Signs and Wonders had been already multiplied so often, both in *Egypt* and in the *Wilderness*, that the Triumphs of the God of *Israel* over the heathen Deities were generally confessed and acknowledged. The most apparent Improbabilities and the most invincible Obstacles were almost entirely removed out of their Way. Their Hopes were now just going to be turned into Enjoyment ; and what they had with so much longing Expectation desired to see, was actually in Sight; nay, they had set their Feet upon the promised Land, were advancing forward to take possession of it, and had already made some Attempts upon dislodging their Enemies with amazing Rapidity and Success. The speedy Progress of their Arms had spread such a Terror amongst the Kings of the *Amorites*, and the Kings of the *Canaanites*, that their Hearts melted, neither was there any Spirit in them.—The strong Walls of *Jericho* were not able to endure any formal and tedious Siege; for on the seventh Day only they fell down flat to the Ground, and the People went up into the City, every Man, without any Opposition, strait before him, and they took the City.

And thus far Matters answered their most sanguine Expectations ; for the Promises of God had been punctually fulfilled, and it was manifest beyond Dispute, that nothing had been able to stand before them. But past Events were the Measure of future ; and therefore neither Leaders nor People suspected any Interruption in their

Jof. vii. 5.

Conquests: When, lo! a sudden Stroke of ill Success damped their Joy, and stopped them in the very Career of Victory; for an advanced Party were smitten by the Men of *Ai*, who chased them from before the Gate, even unto *Shebarim*, and smote them in the going down.—The Consequence of which Repulse was this, that the Hearts of the People melted, and became as Water.

But, without doubt, what these lost in Spirits, their Enemies gained: While the one Side was terrified and dismayed, the other assumed fresh Confidence, and grew insolent in Victory; for, perhaps, this People, in Spite of all their boasted Privileges, were not invincible; and who knew but the Gods of the Nations might prove at last too hard for the God of *Israel*?

How then could their Leader maintain his Credit, and support his Authority among them, since this unfavourable Event seemed to reproach his own Veracity, and the Veracity of God? And how could he rally such a broken-hearted and dispirited People, who had always a jealous Eye upon the contending Powers, and at every cross Accident distrusted their final Security? He doubtless must be in some Confusion as well as they; would find it hard to vindicate his own Honour, and support their farther Dependence upon the God of *Israel*; and therefore, like a Person on the Brink of Distraction and Despair, he rent his Cloaths, and fell prostrate upon the Ground, he and all the Elders of *Israel*, and put Dust upon their Heads; like

like poor afflicted Supplicants pleading for Mercy, and begging to know the Cause of their Sufferings. Jof. vii. 6.

Joshua in particular thus expostulates with God—O Lord God, wherefore hast thou brought all this People over Jordan, to deliver us into the Hands of the Amorites to destroy us? Would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other Side Jordan!

This appears to be the Language of great Dissatisfaction and Despair; by no Means consistent with that extraordinary Measure of Wisdom and Piety, which are allowed to be essential in his Character. He seems to insinuate, as if God had only freed them from one Snare to draw them into a greater; had delivered them from one Scene of Calamities, only to make their Ruin more wretched, by making it more conspicuous, and had swelled their Hopes merely to increase their Disappointments.

Such impious Jealousies as these had been common amongst the People; but one would hardly expect to find them in the Breast of so wise and steady a Commander. The Truth was, he did not know what to say: His Reason was so disordered and perplexed at this unhappy Change of Circumstances, that he could not reflect with Patience upon the Causes which might probably produce it. This appears from the Words before us — O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their Backs before their Enemies?

Had

Had he considered this Affair with that Caution and Deliberation which its Importance necessarily required, he would not have suspected a Breach of Covenant on the Side of God, but on the People; for the Obligations were mutual, and God had no longer engaged to protect them from Violence and Destruction, than they walked in his Laws, and obeyed his Commandments.

Joshua vi. 17,
18.

But as soon as the Cause of this unhappy Miscarriage came to be more particularly inquired into, the Justice of God then appeared very manifest: It was not He had failed in his Promises, but *Israel* had sinned; for God had charged them not to meddle with the Plunder of *Jericho*, since it was a cursed Thing; if they did, they would certainly pollute themselves, and make the Camp of *Israel* a Curse, and bring Trouble and Vexation upon it. All was to be destroyed, except the Vessels of Gold and Silver, of Brass and Iron, which were to be consecrated to divine Uses, and put into God's Treasury: Yet in spite of this strict Command, upon the Observation of which no less than the Welfare of all *Israel* depended, some had been such vile mercenary Wretches as to sacrifice the public Good to private Gain; had taken some of the richest of the Spoils, and in a secret clandestine Manner converted them to their own Advantage: — *They have taken, says God, of the accursed Thing, and have also stolen and dissembled also, and they have put it even amongst their own Stuff.* And is not this a shameful Breach of
2
Covenant?

Covenant? Is it any Wonder that the Children of *Israel* could not stand before their Enemies, but turned their Backs upon them? The Reason is plain; because they were accursed: *Neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the Accursed from amongst you.*

Here then was an exprefs Declaration, that God would never prosper the Arms of the *Israelites*, nor give them any Advantages over their Enemies, whilst they acted upon any selfish or private Views; for though it was his Design to secure the Peace and Happiness of this People, yet he had made no absolute unconditional Covenant with them: All the Prosperity he had promised them was plainly relative to their Manners and good Behaviour; therefore every Member of this Society was equally concerned to set a Guard upon his own Conduct, as well as others; because the Compact was general, excepting no particular Persons; nor had any particular Persons an Interest separate from the Public: Therefore, to be intent upon accumulating Wealth, heaping up Riches, and aggrandizing themselves under such Circumstances, and in such perilous Times as those, when the Welfare of the whole Community required a Contempt of Poverty and Danger, and an entire Sacrifice of all carnal and worldly Enjoyments, was in fact to ruin the common Cause, to transgress the Laws of their Sovereign, and in the End to destroy themselves.

A very

A very few such rotten Members as these would overturn the State—For, respecting only natural Causes, they would soon spread their corrupt malignant Humours over the whole political Body, and poison its Constitution: therefore they must be lopt off to preserve the Soundness and Vigour of the Whole. A strict Inquiry must be made to find out such Grievances; and, when found, the Authors of them should be punished in some open and notorious Manner, both for the Benefit of public Example, and because it is better for one Man to die, and that a whole Nation perish not.

John xi. 50.

This sound Principle of political Security divine Providence has sufficiently authorised by this Instance before us. *Joshua* was a perfect Stranger to the Author of his People's Sufferings: He was conscious of having done no Wrong himself, and, amidst such a numerous Host of People, it would be very difficult, if not impossible, for him to find out who had. But God was pleased to assist him in the Discovery: He commands him to sanctify the People, to bring every Tribe before him, and he himself would point out the Tribe where the Transgression was concealed: From Tribes he should proceed in like Manner to Families, from Families to Households, from Households to single Men: *And, says God, whoever shall be taken with the accursed Thing, shall be burnt with Fire, he and all that be bath.*

By

By this Means the greedy selfish Wretch was soon detected; was confronted with the Villainy, and forced to own it: And the Sentence of Death was speedily executed upon him, as God commanded; for all *Israel* stoned him with Stones, and then burned him with all his ill-gotten Treasure *. The Consequence of which public Example of Justice was this, that the Lord turned from the Fierceness of his Anger, and *Israel* prospered in the Destruction of their Enemies.

Jof. vii. 25.

26.

This single Instance might, perhaps, be sufficient to justify the following Inference, viz. that God abhors a narrow selfish Spirit, which regards only private Advantages, though at the Expence of public Good: And the Punishment here inflicted might serve as a Warning to every Member of Society not to run the Hazard of exposing both himself and his Fellow-Citizens to the divine Displeasure by a Conduct so sinful and provoking.—But since too much cannot be done to open the Eyes of an unthinking People, who are sleeping at ease in the midst of Danger, and who will not be at the Pains to examine

* The Person guilty of this enormous Piece of Rapaciousness was one *Achan*, of the Tribe of *Judab*. — The Things stolen and concealed were,

A goodly *Babylonish* Garment,

Two hundred *Shekels* of Silver,

And a Wedge of Gold of fifty *Shekels* Weight.

Such splendid Baits as these were not to be resisted; they soon attracted his Attention, and engaged his Affections; therefore he coveted and took them. *Joshua* vii. 21.

C

into

into their own Hearts, and make those Discoveries which are essential to their Welfare; we will therefore pursue this Argument a little farther, by considering the bad Effects of mercenary Principles upon the national Prosperity, after the Children of *Israel* were firmly established in their promised Land.

1 Sam. viii.

When *Samuel* was too old to manage the Reins of Power, and to support all that Weight of Business, which so large a Community must necessarily lay upon him, he thought it prudent to commit the Management of all public Affairs to the Care of his two Sons; and who, from so shining an Example of strict Honour and Integrity, and the national Prosperity attending it, one would have thought had been less liable to fall into a Snare, which must inevitably prove their Ruin: But no sooner were they invested with the Trust, than they began to abuse it—They only considered Government as a better Opportunity for becoming rich; therefore they turned aside from their Father's honest upright Ways to follow filthy *Lucre*; and their Rapaciousness became so intolerably offensive as to provoke the Injured to meditate a Remedy and to strive to redress themselves: The Consequences whereof were civil Broils and popular Tumults; and, at last, an intire Subversion of that Form of Government, which, on the best Foundations, had been established by God himself.

In

In the Prophet *Isaiah's* Time this Vice became more universal; it then descended from the Rulers, and infected the whole Body of the People: it was then a general Complaint commanded to be made against them, and likewise visited with a general Judgment; for God declares by *him*, that he was wroth at their Covetousness, and therefore had smitten them. Isa. lvii. 17.

But the Prophet *Jeremiah* makes more grievous and bitter Complaints against them still: He declares that God had sent a Multitude of Enemies to destroy them; because, from the least of them to the greatest of them, every one was given to Covetousness; *from the Prophet even unto the Priest every one dealeth falsely; therefore, says God, I will give their Wives unto others, and their Fields to them that shall inherit them.* Jer. vi. 13.
viii. 10.

This was one of the prevailing Vices of those Times, which made them ripe for Destruction; that helped forward their Wretchedness, and proved the sad Occasion of a long and grievous Captivity; and, what deserves our particular Remark in this Place, is, that the very same Branch of Iniquity, which was productive of such bitter Fruits to them, was no less fruitful afterwards in poisoning their Enemies; for the Prophet commissioned to denounce *their* Overthrow professes their End was come, because they had filled up the Measure of their Covetousness: And whether from the great Terror of God's Jer. li. 13.

Jer. li: 30.

Judgments, or from the natural Timidity of this Vice, which disposes Men to be Cowards, it followed, that they turned their Backs upon their Enemies, they forbore to fight, they skulked into dark secret Holds, and became as Women.

From the *Jewish* we may next proceed to the *Roman* People, and see how the Case stood with that Community, which was once the Nurse of Heroes, the Queen of Nations, the Glory of Empires, and the truest Pattern of Virtue and Knowledge. — In the Times of the *Jugurthine* War, they were fallen from every Thing great and praise-worthy into the deepest Gulphs of Avarice and Corruption. — That generous and noble Spirit, which once animated all their Actions, and made them the Terror as well as Envy of the World, was now degenerated into such mercenary selfish Principles as made them ripe for Destruction. — Their Enemies had now discovered a much nearer Way to Conquest than through Fields of Blood: They had learned a Secret how to subdue those, whom Arms had made invincible; for they were ready to deliver up themselves and their Liberties, to any that would bid highest, and give most Money for them.* —

Their

* If *C. Pontius* the *Samnite* had lived in this Age, he might probably have had his Wishes gratified, in putting an End to the *Roman* Empire by corrupt Means: since, as *Sallust* informs us, in *Bello Jugurth. Omnia Romæ venalia esse*. And *Florus*, l. iii. c. 1. *Fortius adversus Romanos aurum esse, quam ferrum*. When the subtle King *Jugurtha* could neither by open Force repel, nor by secret

undermining

Their Leaders made War to enrich themselves with the Spoils of others, more than to acquire Glory, and redress the Injured; and often plundered those very Provinces which they ought in Duty to have protected.

The darling Passion of their Souls was an insatiable Thirst after Wealth; which they were resolved to gratify at the Expence of Justice and every other social Virtue: The Means employed to secure it, whether right or wrong, made no Part of their Consideration; and, when got, was as scandalously used as acquired: It served only to administer Fuel to the Fire of lustful Appetence, and to make them more splendidly wicked. — But their Luxury and Debauchery soon unstrung the Sinews of their Bodies, and infeeble their Minds: It made the greatest Heroes of the World shrink into a Race of Cowards; and, at last, become Slaves to the most wicked and contemptuous Wretches amongst Mankind.

undermining Fraud divert, the just Resentment of the *Roman Senate*, he found at last a better Way to escape; for, *Pacem emit*. And he gives it as his own Opinion, that the whole City *mature perituram, si emptorem invenerit*. — *Pontius* therefore needed not to have waited so many Ages for this Advantage, as *Cicero, de Off. 1. 2.* pretends to insinuate; since so great a Tide of Corruption flowed in upon them in little more than the Space of two hundred Years.

But how different their Principles in the *Tarentine Wars*? *Cum Medicum, venale regis Pyrrhi caput offerentem, Curius remisit; Fabricius oblatam sibi a rege imperii partem repudiavit: Cum scitilia sua Samnitio præferret auro; Fabricius decem pondo argenti circa Rufinum consularem virum, quasi luxuriam, censoriâ gravitate damnaret. Quis ergo miretur his moribus, virtute, militiâ, victorem populum Romanum fuisse? Flor. 1. i. c. 18.* And the Wonder must equally run the contrary Way, when tainted with opposite Principles.

And

And thus fell the greatest and noblest State that ever arose upon the Stage of Life: It was sacrificed to the greedy avaricious Spirit of base and unworthy Men; and wherever such Seeds of Corruption are nursed and cherished, they will always produce such rank pernicious Weeds, as will intercept the bright Beams of Virtue, and smother our Happiness.*

It has been very justly observed, that there are always, in every State, some natural and moral Causes tending to sink and destroy, as well as to raise and support it: That the Observation will hold good in the present Instance is very manifest: for in the earliest State of this Vice, even in its Infancy, when it has no other Object of Pleasure, but the Greatness of its Acquisitions, though it may make a People *industrious*, it can never make them *brave*; because it is such a narrow, mean, and spiritless Principle, as must necessarily chill the generous Warmth of all public and social Undertakings: Why else does it prevail mostly in the cold, barren, and inactive Stage of Life, when the Sun is almost setting, and the Powers of Nature too far spent to ripen any Fruits to Perfection?

Should then the Exigencies of State require vigorous Efforts, or the bold enterprizing Attempts of personal Courage and manly Activity, where are the Persons pro-

* *Itaque quod Apollo Pythius oraculum edidit, Spartam nulla re aliâ, nisi avaritiâ, perituram; id videtur non solum Lacedæmoniis, sed et omnibus opulentis populis, prædixisse.* Cic. de Off. II. 21.

per to engage in them? Will not this unanimating Principle transform Youth into Age, destroy Ability, and make Men drowsy, flow, and impotent? Will not its cold ungenial Breath blast the Laurels of martial Fame, freeze them into Cowards, and make them skulk from Danger? Will it not strip them of every lively sparkling Imagination, and naturally sink them into Diffidence and Despair?

But when Men are once placed in affluent and splendid Circumstances, it is seldom in their Power to escape those Evils which are known to be their frequent Attendants.—Riches are the natural Incentives to Luxury; but Luxury is the Parent of Indolence: And when Intemperance and Idleness are become ruling Vices, both the Love of Business and the Love of Liberty must be soon extinguished.—They will then find themselves fast bound in the Chains of a shameful and inglorious Captivity; will be forced to submit to the worst of Drudgeries, and will have no Courage to look up and demand their Deliverance.—How poor then must be the Services of such abject drowsy Slaves to save a sinking State, should there be no other to defend it?

If ever they are spurred to Action, it must not be by the Desire of Applause, nor the Dread of Shame; since they know no Good but Self-enjoyment, dread no Evil but Necessity or Want: If ever they are made to contend with Difficulties affecting a Multitude, it must be only in such Circumstances where the Spoil is great, or the Bait very tempting: In all others, where that *Phantom*
Honour

Honour is to be the sole Reward of Victory, they will despise the shadowy Nothing, and disdain the Struggle.

The Vices of the Mind, like the Distempers of the Body, are very communicative and infectious: No Rank or Condition of People can be exempted from the Danger of their Contagion: Therefore, in what Part soever of the Flock they break forth, the Whole will rot and perish under the poisonous Influence of the same Disease. — In superior Stations, indeed, they will appear the more glaring and conspicuous, because of the Eminency of Place, and their Effects are more to be dreaded in Proportion to Men's larger Sphere of Activity: But one Talent may be abused as well as ten; and there may, yea, Experience teaches there * is the same corrupt Heart, the same vicious Desire, and in all Respects the same Propensity to Evil, in the Breast of the lowest Mechanic, as of the highest Degrees of Trust and Power: The only Difference is this; the one does Wrong because he *can* do it, and the other would if he *could*.

But when God is pleased to meditate the Destruction of a Kingdom or People, *He* is not provoked to this strange Work so frequently by the Wickedness of a Few, as of a Multitude. — The Sum total of a national Iniquity is made up of the additional Vices of all its particular Members; and He who can see the Hearts of all Men knows

* ————— *Quemvis mediâ arripe turbâ :*
Aut ab avaritiâ, aut miser ambitione laborat.

Hor. Sat. l. i. f. 4.

how

how much each Individual contributes to the common Stock: And, generally speaking, his Mercy and Forbearance is so great, that he suffers the Account to swell till it can rise no higher.—Had there been ten righteous Men found in *Sodom*, it might have remained unto this Day; and the House of *Judah* would never have seen so many bitter Calamities fallen upon her Children, but because from the Sole of the Foot to the Crown of the Head there was no Soundness in them.

Whenever therefore we find the Rod of Vengeance hanging over our Heads, it will be of more Use to divert the Blow, by considering the State of our own Actions, than by censuring the Conduct of others; for, at the most, this is only comparing one wicked Character with another; and the Discovery of our Neighbour's Guilt is no Proof of our Innocency.

If we would act like Men truly concerned for our own and the public Welfare, we should use our utmost Endeavours to remove the Causes of our present Misfortunes; and, since a general Reformation must begin with Particulars, so every Man should be sure to reform one: Without this, that external Shew of Religion, which is only put on for the Solemnity of this Day, is but a further Aggravation of our Guilt, a daring Insult upon *Omniscience*, and a Mockery at Heaven; and so little Reason shall we have to expect that God will fight our Battles and go forth with our Fleets and Armies, that he will certainly

D

fight

fight against us, defeat all our Enterprises, and make us shamefully turn our Backs before our Enemies.

Let then the Punishment of other Kingdoms and Nations be a Warning to this to escape their Vices.—Let us carefully shun those dangerous Rocks whereon they have split and perished; and teach Posterity the Wisdom and Safety of turning to God by Faith and sincere Repentance. — Let us banish from our Hearts the *accursed Thing* that provokes God to Anger; and learn to know the Things that make for Peace, before they be hid from our Eyes.—Let us acknowledge him as the sole Fountain both of private and public Good, and not run after those *lying Vanities* that can never profit nor deliver us.—Let us not ask for Wealth to consume it upon our Lusts, nor covet Ease and Security to live in Riot and Excess.—In a Word, let us be temperate with Respect to all the Enjoyments of Life; be diligent and active in our several Stations and Callings to promote the Honour of God, the true Interest of our King and People; and then we may hope to reap all the blessed Fruits of Peace and social Harmony, be secure from the Terrors of impending Judgments, and march safely on to the Possession of our heavenly *Canaan*.

10 FEB 58

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